

# TOWARD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORS

## I. FIRST POSSIBLE CAUSE: THE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE

Why Is This Happening?	How Can I Tell?	What Should I Do?
Possible Cause	Clues	Action
1. Maturation – The Behavior is due to the child's developmental stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have read about it in books</li> <li>• I have seen children at the same stage behave this way</li> <li>• I remember doing it myself when I was a child</li> <li>• It is a necessary part of human development</li> </ul> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Always Reflect on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of child's expectations</li> <li>• Sense of relationship with child</li> <li>• Child's sense of self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Relax</u></b> – All children do it. It will end/evolve</li> <li>• <b><u>Tolerate</u></b> – It is developmentally significant. It is developmentally useful</li> <li>• <b><u>Channel</u></b> – Allow the behavior in certain places at certain times</li> <li>• <b><u>Stop</u></b> – Stop behavior when it is disruptive or a danger to others or self. Remember, behavior will return</li> </ul>

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### II. SECOND POSSIBLE CAUSE: INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Why Is This Happening?	How Can I Tell?	What Should I Do?
Possible Cause	Clues	Action
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not all children of a certain age act in exactly the same ways</li> <li>Temperamental qualities account for differences in behaviors</li> <li>Children are individuals</li> <li>All children experience the world differently according to their temperament</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not due solely to developmental stage</li> <li>Information about the child’s temperament qualities from birth</li> <li>Have read about it – research on temperament</li> </ul> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Always Reflect on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sense of child’s expectations</li> <li>Sense of relationship with child</li> <li>Child’s sense of self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Observe and identify</b> temperamental style</li> <li><b>Adapt</b> your expectation and interactions</li> <li>When possible, <b>offer options</b> in your program that allow for and appreciate children’s different ways of expressing themselves and responding to the world</li> <li><b>Conversations</b> with parents</li> </ul>

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### III. THIRD POSSIBLE CAUSE: THE ENVIRONMENT

Why Is This Happening?	How Can I Tell?	What Should I Do?
Possible Cause	Clues	Action
1. The specific environment: The child care setting  2. The general environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The home setting</li> <li>• Family situation</li> <li>• Lifestyle</li> <li>• Culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavior is not due to a developmental stage or individual differences</li> <li>• In the childcare setting: The group is responding to a specific condition – several children exhibiting similar behavior</li> <li>• Response to conflict between different parts of child’s world – when home and childcare have different expectations and roles</li> <li>• In the home: The child is responding to difficulties he/she is currently experiencing in the home – sudden change in the child’s behavior</li> </ul> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Always Reflect on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of child’s expectations</li> <li>• Sense of relationship with child</li> <li>• Child’s sense of self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you decide the behavior is in response to the childcare setting: <b>Do something</b> – For example, change the length of circle time – make sure children are getting enough protection/attention/stimulation/structure and calm</li> <li>• If due to conflict between home and childcare: <b>Get more information</b> about other environment/cultures from the parents or other professionals</li> <li>• <b>Do not Focus on individual child</b> – child is not in control of conflict</li> <li>• When possible, <b>change</b> or <b>adapt</b> our expectation to reduce conflict</li> </ul>

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### IV. FOURTH POSSIBLE CAUSE: THE CHILD DOES NOT KNOW BUT IS READY TO LEARN

Why Is This Happening?	How Can I Tell?	What Should I Do?
Possible Cause	Clues	Action
1. The child does not know something but is ready to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavior is not due to a developmental stage, individual differences, or environment</li> <li>• The child is <b>young</b></li> <li>• The child is in a <b>new/unfamiliar situation</b></li> <li>• The child is facing a <b>new task or problem</b></li> </ul> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Always Reflect on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of child’s expectations</li> <li>• Sense of relationship with child</li> <li>• Child’s sense of self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach</li> <li>• Talk – <b>explain over and over</b></li> <li>• Give <b>encouragement</b> for small successes</li> <li>• Be <b>patient</b> with failures</li> <li>• Always <b>offer</b> help</li> </ul>

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### V. FIFTH POSSIBLE CAUSE: UNMET EMOTIONAL NEED

Why Is This Happening?	How Can I Tell?	What Should I Do?
Possible Cause	Clues	Action
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The child has missed out on something that is/was developmentally and emotionally important</li> <li>2. Instead of going away, the need or hunger has intensified</li> <li>3. Child is searching for ways to meet the need. The behavior is the child’s attempt to meet the need without being able to rely on adult assistance</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The behavior is developmentally inappropriate – the child is not “acting his/her age”</li> <li>• The behavior has a <b>driven</b> quality - The child has to do it</li> <li>• The behavior is <b>everywhere</b> and <b>always</b></li> <li>• The behavior, even when channeled or stopped, <b>keeps popping up</b></li> <li>• The usual ways of handling and helping most children with this behavior do not seem to help this child</li> </ul> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Always Reflect on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of child’s expectations</li> <li>• Sense of relationship with child</li> <li>• Child’s sense of self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Do something</b> – This behavior will not pass and it may get worse</li> <li>• <b>Respond to the child’s needs</b> actively: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>through deeds – words</li> <li>through giving – not withholding</li> <li>through support – not punishment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Sometimes you <b>stop the behavior:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When child is hurting self or others</li> <li>“NO” is not a period – it is a pause</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Meet the needs as much as possible with <b>quiet firmness and patience</b></li> <li>• Remember, the child <b>can’t stop/control</b> behavior- get additional support for yourself, child and family</li> </ul>

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